

began a once a month offering on the second or third Thursday of the month. Thus far we have heard talks by Vincent Rossi on St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Theologian, to mention only two, and this last Thursday, a wonderful slide show and talk by Mother Nina of St. Nilus Skete in Alaska on Orthodoxy in Alaska. About twenty-five people heard her speak about her monastery, their way of life their, about St. Herman, the native Orthodox peoples of Alaska, etc. I regretted that our entire parish was not present for such a great and inspiring spiritual banquet. These Thursday evening talks will pick up again after Great Lent. —*Fr. Lawrence*

• SENIOR LUNCH:

Last get-together before Great Lent. Thursday, March 14, Noon. It's a non-meat Potluck lunch.

• ANNUNCIATION:

Pascha before Pascha! Vigil on Sunday, March 24 at 4 PM; Vespers Liturgy on Monday, March 25 at 5 PM. If you are a bit late coming to church for Monday's Festal Vespers Liturgy, since it begins at 5 PM, it's still blessed to receive Holy Communion.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR OUR

## *Blini Brunch*

Complete with sour cream, lox, herring, and caviar...

(Not to mention butter, syrup and bacon)

**Sunday, March 10, 2013 • 12 NOON**

We will be honoring this tradition with our family and friends, so be sure to invite them. Please come enjoy Blini with us as we prepare to enter that wonderful time of Lent.

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## March 3, 2013 - Sunday of the Prodigal Son

• KONTAKION OF THE PRODIGAL SON, Tone 3

Foolishly I sprang away / from Thy great fatherly glory, / and dispersed in wicked deeds / the riches that Thou didst give me. / With the Prodigal I therefore / cry unto Thee now: / I have sinned against Thee, O compassionate Father. / But receive me in repentance; / and make me as one of Thy hired servants, O Lord.

### ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, March 2: *baptism cancelled*  
3:30 PM, Catechism, *On the Creed, part 1 of 3*  
5 PM, VIGIL / Confessions
- Sunday, March 3: 9–10 AM, Confessions  
10 AM, Divine Liturgy  
One Year Memorial for Josh Alfahel  
11:45 PM, Church School  
Noon, Agape luncheon to follow the Liturgy
- Tues., March 5: 7 PM, Rohnert Park Study Group
- Wed., March 6: *Fr. Lawrence in SF all day at Bishop's Diocesan Council*  
6 PM, Vespers
- Thurs., March 7: 6 PM, *Mystery of Holy Unction* for Kathie Franotovitch

• FORGIVENESS SUNDAY – March 17:

In three weeks we will serve the Vespers of Forgiveness, right after the usual Sunday Agape Meal. The Service, which ushers in the Great Fast of Lent, begins at 1:15 PM. At the conclusion of this Service we will ask forgiveness of each other, each person approaching the priests, then each other. Those

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who can, do a prostration before the other; those who cannot simply ask forgiveness, and that is more than enough. Please don't avoid the Vespers because you cannot make a (or many) prostrations. We say to each: "forgive me;" and each answers back, "forgive me. God forgives." The important thing is to ask for forgiveness and then give it. —*Fr. Lawrence*

- LENTEN RECIPE

We talk about pursuing prayer, silence and spiritual reading during Great Lent, and certainly these are good things which we need. But perhaps there are some other things you might do as well. For example: make a new relationship or friendship. Making friends sounds like a passive a thing—but you can make it an active thing. Befriend a captive audience in an elder-care center or a nursing home. Bake something for the next door neighbor who has a below-the-poverty-level life. One can't buy a faithful friend in the supermarket, but one can be a faithful friend for someone and win a heart again. Make visitations in the hospitals or homeless shelters with other parishioners, and you'll learn that there are a lot of broken-hearted and lonely people out there. It might get you out of your own problems for a while and give you perspective. Be a mentor for single-parent kids. There's a big brother/big sister program. Become an exemplary model of a faithful friend—as a turnabout for some sin possibly committed against you. Anybody can read books. Not everybody goes out and makes friends. — *borrowed and adapted, from Fr. John Udics*

- WEEKLY COURSE OF STUDIES IN ORTHODOXY:

Each Saturday at 3:30 PM, from March 2 until April 20, a class on Orthodox life and theology will be held in the Protection Church. The class is a requirement for Catechumens, however, all are encouraged to participate. During the next three weeks we will be studying the Creed, and after that, other interesting topics. See the parish website for more information.

- BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON:

On the three Sundays prior to Great Lent we sing Psalm 136, which begins with the phrase: "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion." This was a psalm sung by the Jewish people who had been taken as captive slaves to Babylon (597–538 BC) after the Temple and city of Jerusalem had been destroyed. It is a lament

of exile and enslavement, not in Egypt as before, but in Babylon. So, Babylon, in scripture, stands for defeat, sin, humiliation and alienation from God. This week we hear of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), far from his Father, in wretched exile rather than Paradise. As we and the Catechumens begin our own Lenten journey, we are asked to identify ourselves with him and the ancient Jews in Babylon by singing this Psalm. In its final verse, we hear words which express the utter frustration and devastation of having lost home, family and God. We hear words of violent and outrageous revenge: *Happy shall he be, that shall take and dash thine infants against the rock. Alleluia.* We recoil in horror. Perhaps those that have forgotten the principles of understanding the Scriptures (see March Bulletin) would like to remove that Psalm from the Bible. They are not aware of how the Rock is Christ (see I Cor. 10:4), and the infants are our "intrusive thoughts" (*logismi*) which tempt us into sin just forming up. The psalm expresses the brutality of tribal warfare, and the human penchant and perversion for revenge. The *little infants* which were left alive in wars would grow up to take revenge on and destroy the warrior who was so careless (just as our unchecked *logismi* can grow into passions which destroy *our* unseen warfare). We are not as removed from that brutal idea as we think. The basic plot of the movie **Godfather II** is that little Vito Corleone is the infant (small child in this case), whom the Sicilian Mafia boss wants to kill (having just killed the rest of Vito's family). The boss was aware that if Vito were left alive, it could be bad for him later in life. So, here is to the Lenten season of hits on the intrusive "little infant thoughts"—seemingly so harmless—that lead us to distraction, despair, confusion and sin. We empower the soul to put the stranglehold on our unruly desires, self-pity, and self-justification. It alone then controls who can operate in the neighborhood of our heart, and infusing our life with grace until it makes us an "offer we can't refuse!" (*borrowed from a forgotten source*).

- THURSDAYS:

Back in October, a member of our Parish asked me if we might have more classes or presentations, in order to deepen our knowledge of the Orthodox way of life. Of course, we already have our wonderful Tuesday Night Rohnert Park Study Group, which is taught by our Deacons and by Reader Vincent Rossi. But this request for more opportunities to learn was music to my ears, and I was and am grateful for it. So, right away, we