

God's promise, given after the fall of Adam and Eve (see Gen. 3:15). For this reason the information of the Incarnation of the Word of God is the greatest notification in history...The human nature was united with the divine nature without alteration, unconfusedly, indivisibly, inseparably, immediately from the moment of conception. This means that first the Virgin Mary tasted the blessing of the divine incarnation, *theosis*. That which the Disciples of Christ tasted during Pentecost, and we during Baptism, at the time of the mystery of the divine Eucharist, when we commune of the Body and Blood of Christ, and that which the Saints will live in the Kingdom of the Heavens, the Virgin Mary lived from the first moment of the conception and carrying in the womb...Consequently Christ for nine whole months, day and night, nourished with His sanctified blood the Virgin Mary. This is a foreshadowing of the ceaseless divine Communion and of the ceaseless relationship and communion of the Saints with Christ which will occur mainly in the next life. For this reason the Virgin Mary is a foreshadowing of the future age. From this viewpoint she is Paradise... According to the holy Fathers that which happened physically in the Virgin Mary, this happens spiritually to each one whose soul is virginal, that is, is cleansed of the passions. Christ, who was born once in the flesh, wants to be born, always in the spirit, by those who wish, and thus He becomes a babe, forming Himself in them through the virtues.
—*Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos*

- SUE KOURA:

Sue is slowly recovering from the very serious stroke she had on Christmas day, and is being cared for at Friends House at 684 Benicia Dr., Santa Rosa, CA 95409 (Rincon Valley), Room #1. She would be very glad for visits from parishioners.

- BAPTISM:

Eleanor Octavia Scarborough is being baptized this Saturday at 10 AM. On Sunday after lunch there will be a picnic potluck dessert reception on the church lawn to celebrate, hosted by Tatiana Castillo (Godmother) and Gary Collins (Godfather). The needs for Eleanor are baby clothes (sizes six-months and up) or any donations to the Tidee Didee Diaper Service account would be very helpful (#51675).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

March 23, 2014 ~ Veneration of the Cross

- TROPARION OF THE CROSS, Tone One:

O Lord, save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance. Grant victories to the Orthodox Christians over their adversaries; and by virtue of Thy Cross, preserve Thy habitation.

- KONTAKION OF THE CROSS, Tone Seven:

The fiery sword no longer guards the gate of Eden, for in a strange and glorious way the wood of the Cross has quenched its flames. The sting of death and the victory of hades are now destroyed, for Thou art come, my Savior, crying to unto those in hades: "Return again to Paradise."

- INSTEAD OF THE TRISAGION:

Before Thy Cross, we bow down, O Master, and Thy holy Resurrection, we glorify.

ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, March 22: 10 AM, Baptism of Scarborough baby
4:45 PM, Trisagion for the Departed
5 PM, VIGIL FOR THE CROSS and bringing out of the Cross at the end of Matins
- Sunday, March 23: 10 AM, Divine Liturgy / 11:45, Church School
Noon, Agape luncheon in Hall
- Mon., March 24: 6:15 PM, Vigil for Annunciation
- Tues., March 25: 5 PM, Vespertal Liturgy for Annunciation
- Wed., March 26: 3 PM, Catechism, *On the Holy Mysteries*
5 PM, Confessions, 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy
- Thurs., March 27: 8 AM, Matins / 6 PM, Vespers
7 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Friday, March 28: 8 AM, Matins / 6 PM Akathist to the Theotokos

- Saturday, March 29: 10 AM, Sisterhood Work Party (Kitchen and Storage Shed)

- USHERS TODAY:

Thom Stewart and Samuel Coon.

- CONFESSION:

During Great Lent, we intensify our spiritual work, fasting, works of mercy, prayers at home, prayers in Church, and we make an effort to keep a watch on our mind, heart and words as we prepare for Pascha. This is the work of repentance—a continual turning of our heart, thoughts, words, deeds and time to our loving Savior. Integral to repentance is Confession, and I invite each of you to come to Confession during Lent, more than once, as we struggle—members of one another—to cleanse the image of God within. May the Lord send us abundant Grace. Don't delay—the Lord stands at the door and knocks. **PARENTS, PLEASE NOTE:** For those over the age of SEVEN who wish to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week and Pascha, it is required to make a confession at least once in the three weeks before Holy Week.

- PLEASE PLAN AHEAD:

No Confessions will be heard after Holy Wednesday. *Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of repentance* (2 Cor. 6:2)—Holy Week is the time of the Lord's passion and many Services, and there is no time then for confession.

- CHOIR REHEARSAL:

Note to all Choir members—our **27th Annual Fifth-Saturday-of-Lent Rehearsal** will be on Saturday, April 5 at 10:30 AM. This rehearsal is mandatory.

- UPCOMING:

On Thursday, April 3, 9 AM, we will serve the Matins of the Fifth Thursday of Great Lent, in which we once again sing the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete. This hymn is a meditation using scripture, teaching us the meaning of sin, repentance and how the Lord constantly seeks and loves His creation. In the midst of this great poem we will also read the Life of Saint Mary of Egypt. The *Liturgy of the Presanctified* will follow

Matins. We expect to end about 12:30 PM.

- ON THE CROSS:

You should continually keep in mind the great humiliation which the Lord took upon Himself in His ineffable love for us: how the divine Logos [Word] dwelt in a womb; how He took human nature upon Himself; His birth...His gradual bodily growth; the shame He suffered, the insults the vilification, ridicule and abuse; how He was scourged and spat upon, derided and mocked; the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns; His condemnation by those in power; the outcry of...His own people, against Him: "Away with him, away with him, crucify him" (Jn. 19:15); the cross, the nails, the lance, the drink of vinegar and gall; the scorn of the Gentiles; the [laughing] derision of the passers-by who said: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross and we will believe you" (cf. Mt. 27:39-42); and the rest of the sufferings which He patiently accepted for us: crucifixion; death; the three-day burial; the descent into hades. Then keep in mind all that has come from these sufferings. Do you see to what a height of glory the Lord's human nature was raised up by God's justice through these sufferings and humiliations? —*St. Mark the Ascetic*

- ANNUNCIATION ~ Monday and Tuesday:

The feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary is a feast of the Lord and of the Mother of God (Theotokos). It is a feast of the Lord because Christ who was conceived in the womb of the Theotokos. It is a feast of the Theotokos because it refers to the person who aided in the conception and Incarnation of the Word of God, that is, the All Holy Virgin Mary... The Annunciation of the Theotokos is the beginning of all feasts of the Lord. In the dismissal hymn of the feast we chant: *Today is the beginning of our salvation and the revelation of the mystery from the ages...* The content of the feast refers to the Archangel Gabriel's visit to the Virgin Mary informing her that the time of the Incarnation of the Word of God had arrived, and that she would become His mother (see Luke 1:26-56)...The word "annunciation" is comprised of two words, *good and message*, and denotes the good notification, the good announcement. This refers to the information that was given through the Archangel that the Word of God would be incarnated for man's salvation. Essentially this is the fulfillment of