

consummation by conjugal intercourse. It is also what explains and justifies the government's involvement in marriage. The government takes no notice of companionship for its own sake, romantic or otherwise. But it has powerful reasons to ensure that whenever possible, children have the benefit of being reared by the mom and dad whose union gave them life. All human beings are equal in dignity and should be equal before the law. But equality only forbids arbitrary distinctions. And there is nothing arbitrary about maximizing the chances that children will know the love of their biological parents in a committed and exclusive bond. A strong marriage culture serves children, families and society by encouraging the ideal of giving kids both a mom and a dad. Indeed, if that is not the public purpose of marriage law, then the "injustice" and "bigotry" charges come back to bite most same-sex marriage supporters. If marriage is just the emotional bond "that matters most" to you—in the revealing words of the circuit judge who struck down California Proposition 8—then personal tastes or a couple's subjective preferences aside, there is no reason of principle for marriage to be pledged to permanence. Or sexually exclusive rather than "open." Or limited to two spouses. Or oriented to family life and shaped by its demands. In that case, every argument for recognizing two men's bond as marital—equality, destigmatization, extending economic benefits -- would also apply to recognizing romantic triads ("throuples," as they are now known). Refusing such recognition would be unfair—a violation of equality—if commitment based on emotional companionship is what makes a marriage. —*From CNN, [www.cnn.com/2013/03/20/opinion/george-gay-marriage/](http://www.cnn.com/2013/03/20/opinion/george-gay-marriage/)*

The "culture wars" are extremely interesting, but we need to reexamine our own lives carefully. For our Orthodox Church, of course, marriage not only establishes a common and practical path to deification, it guarantees, with the birth and upbringing of children, not merely continuation of the race, but above all, the spiritual growth and flourishing of each child. Marriage and family is the work of the husband, the wife and the children co-creating with God. In the words of the Apostle Paul (Eph. 5:32), the mystery of marriage is "great ... in regards to Christ and the Church." When marriage exists not just for itself or for the family, but for the glory of God, then it is faithful to the image that St. Paul describes. —*Fr. Lawrence*

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

April 19, 2015 ~ St. Thomas Sunday

- TROPARION OF THOMAS SUNDAY, Tone Seven:  
Whilst the tomb was sealed, Thou, O Life, didst shine forth from the grave, O Christ God; and whilst the doors were shut, Thou didst come unto Thy disciples, O Resurrection of all, renewing through them an upright Spirit in us according to Thy great mercy.
- KONTAKION OF THOMAS SUNDAY, Tone Eight:  
With his searching right hand, Thomas did probe Thy life-bestowing side, O Christ God; for when Thou didst enter whilst the doors were shut, he cried out unto Thee with the rest of the Apostles: Thou art my Lord and my God.

## ACTIVITIES & EVENTS THIS WEEK

- Saturday, April 18: 9 AM, Paschal Liturgy  
5 PM, Great Vespers  
8 PM, Concert by *The Green Mountain Singers, "Angels Everywhere,"* renaissance music to fit the frescos
- Sunday, April 19: 9 AM, Confessions  
10 AM, Divine Liturgy / No Church School  
Noon, Potluck Agape luncheon  
12:45 PM, Men's Group Meeting, Porch
- Tues., April 21: *Radomitsa*: Memorial Prayers & Blessing of graves\*
- Wed., April 22: 11 AM, Catechism Revisited  
6 PM, Vespers for St. George the Great Martyr
- Thurs., April 23: 8:30 AM, Matins and Liturgy for St. George  
7 PM, Parish Council Meeting
- Saturday, April 25: 9:30 AM—3 PM. Led by Fr. Josiah Trenham

\* RÁDONITSA — DAY OF REJOICING:

The Tuesday after Bright Week is dedicated to the blessing of graves and prayers for the repose of the departed, those who are waiting in the Lord for the General Resurrection. Blessing of graves: 10:30 AM, Forestville; 11:30-ish at the Healdsburg Cemetery; 1:30 or 2 PM at Santa Rosa Memorial Cemetery (Sebastopol by apptmt). All are welcome to attend these joyful Paschal prayers for the departed. —*Fr. Lawrence*

• BEING DISCIPLES:

“As the Father sent me, even so, send I you” said the Lord to the Apostles. Although we are not Apostles we are the disciples of the Risen Lord. We may humanly fear and dread death and the judgment, but truly we are to have no ultimate fear of death since the Savior rose, and we are joined to Him in the Church by baptism, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in the Liturgy, and share His risen life. We ought then to pray daily, giving thanks, and allow the Lord to enter into the locked door of our heart. If we are inwardly quiet for a while, we may spiritually sense the peace that comes when we hear the priest say, “peace be unto you.” We know from the Gospel about St. Thomas that not even doubt can overcome the Lord’s desire to be with us. And because we have been given the gift of peace, we must also then give of ourselves to those that are locked away in their own “upper room” of sadness or fear, loneliness, poverty, doubt or grief. If we happen to visit such people, then say to them “peace be unto you” and “Christ is risen.” —*adapted*

• ON MARRIAGE:

Man and woman are mutually complementary [as expressed in their union and activities together, reflecting] the very image and likeness of God. This spiritual basis of marriage clearly transcends, without suppressing, the fleshly union of the bodies. Fleshly relations when separated from spiritual ones are depraved; they must be woven into the pure and total love between a man and a woman united in marriage. In the New Testament Scripture, from the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, we learn that marriage is a unique and unbreakable union of husband and wife joined by God Himself: “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). The *Marriage Service* likewise makes it clear that

the bridegroom and the bride are united not by themselves, but by God: “For by Thee is the husband joined unto the wife” (*Marriage Service*). For this reason the *Orthodox Marriage Service* is devoid of any oaths or marriage vows on the part of the couple. Their desire and freely given consent are certainly necessary for the marriage, for sacraments are not acts of magic that eliminate the need for human cooperation. Yet no vow or oath can possibly join a man and a woman together in the gracious and absolute way called for in Christian marriage. The true Christian marriage is effected by God Himself. In such a union, described by St. Paul as “a great mystery” (Ephesians 5:32), human love and desire for companionship become a love pervaded and sanctified by divine grace: Water is transformed into the good wine, as it was at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. In a Christian marriage husband and wife manifest in their own lives the union between God and His beloved people; between Christ, the Bridegroom, and the Church, His Bride (Ephesians 5:32). God accompanies husband and wife, bringing them into a unity which will be revealed as perfect and eternal in His Kingdom, and filling their lives with the Holy Spirit so that selfishness and division may be overcome. He sanctifies and purifies their total relationship... He unites them in body and spirit, heart and mind. (excerpt from the *Encyclical Letter of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America on Marriage*, late 1970s)

• CONJUGAL OR REVISIONIST MARRIAGE?:

The attractive civil rights rhetoric of “marriage equality” masks a profound error about what marriage is. Of course, if marriage were simply about recognizing bonds of affection or romance, then two men or two women could form a marriage just as a man and woman can. But so could three or more in the increasingly common phenomenon of group (“polyamorous”) partnerships. In that case, to recognize opposite-sex unions but not same-sex or polyamorous ones would be unfair—a denial of equality. But marriage is far more than your emotional bond with “your Number One person,” to quote same-sex marriage proponent John Corvino. Just as the act that makes marital love also makes new life, so marriage itself is a multilevel—bodily as well as emotional—union that would be fulfilled by procreation and family life. That is what justifies its distinctive norms—monogamy, exclusivity, permanence—and the concept of marital